

THE GUARDIAN

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The picture above was taken sometime in 1966 and is me at approximately 22 years of age feeding a young lad some C-rations. In my helmet you can see some white and that would be my writing paper. This was the only place you could keep something dry. During my year tour I was able to write home to my wife Gloria a grand total of 212 letters. How I was able to do that feat I have no idea except I had promised myself to try and write one letter per day.

I said in the Commanders post notes in the VFW newsletter, "It is an honor and I am prouder than words can express being elected your Commander (of the VFW post 1981) for the year 2006-2007". This is an honor and I want to thank the members for allowing me this

opportunity to serve my fellow veterans in this way.

I must say I'll have a tuff act to follow because the past Commander George Bloch did the job about as good as the job can be done. George "earned" the honor of receiving a "White Hat" from the California Department of the VFW in Reno in June for his outstanding job as Commander this last year. And that is not good enough for George, he has told me he is willing to do whatever is necessary and will help in any way he can in order to help me have the Honor of being presented a white hat also. Thanks George, and I know the post will have an outstanding year because of you and the other members willing to step up and volunteer to do the jobs necessary to keep up the past great performance. June was also the National Association of County Veterans Service

Officers 16 Annual Training Conference in also Reno held at the Silver Legacy Hotel. California had 75 members the most of any State. Training classes offered were in five categories which were, Introduction to Veterans Advocacy, Accreditation Training, Continuing Education Training, Advanced Professional Veterans Advocate Training Education and TRIP Training. With all this going on there was still a little time for some fun and the best part of all was meeting the people from all over the Country who are dedicated to helping Veterans.

Visit our Web Site at:

www.madera-county.com Go to "Select a Department" then scroll down to "Veterans" At Veteran Resources find back copies



Veterans Service Office

Madera Veterans Office
321 W. Yosemite Ave.
Madera Ca 93637
Suite 101

Hours

Mon., Through Fri. 8-5
Dennis Blessing, Service Officer
(559) 675-7766

Madera Transportation
(888) 826-2838 ext 6424
from Merced (**72 Hr. Notice**)
Oakhurst (559) 658-5399

The Guardian is published monthly by Dennis Blessing, Service Officer of the Madera County Veterans Service Office. It is freely issued, via email, to all Madera Veterans and Service Organizations.

The primary purpose of this publication is to provide County Veterans with a timely news source; effectively informing veterans of VA up-dates and other pertinent information. Hopefully, it will also serve as an inter-group vehicle, announcing important activities and information offered by other local service organizations.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

Dennis Blessing, Publisher

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THE REP REPORT



VETERANS PREFERENCE POINTS

Civil Service

Seeking employment with the Federal, State, or Local government? If you are a veteran, in most cases, you are entitled to veterans preference points.

5, 10, & 15 Point Differences

Federal Service— 5 points generally assigned to qualifying veterans. 10 points assigned to disabled veterans (10% service connected rating or higher by Department of Veteran Affairs).

State Service— 10 points are generally assigned to all qualifying veterans during open/non – promotional exams. 15 points are assigned to veterans receiving disability compensation from the Department of Veteran Affairs (10% service connected rating or higher).

Local Government— 5 point preference is generally assigned to all qualifying veterans.

What these Points Mean to You

Veterans Preference points are added to your final score. Final score determinations vary, generally they are determined by written examination, oral interview, or review of your qualifications (resume/application packet). Veteran Preference Points are truly remarkable when you consider the number of competitors who apply for government positions.

Other Eligible's*

Spouses— of 100% disabled veterans; other disabled veterans as well.

Widows— of certain veterans.

Mothers— of certain veterans with service connected disabilities.

* Eligibility varies by federal, state, & local governments.

APPLICATIONS:

Federal Employment

http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/SF15.pdf

State of California

<http://www.spb.ca.gov/Employment/documents/spb1093.pdf>

Local Government**

* **Human Resources will usually request a copy of military discharge



Jesus S. Lopez

**Madera County Veteran
Service Representative
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Madera Ca 93637**

NEW GOVERNMENT CENTER



PROGRESS CONTINUES

SEE MORE AT
MADERA-COUNTY.COM
NEW BUILDING CON-
STRUCTION



PARKING GARAGE DEDICATION JULY 28

'ROCKET MAN' ROCKS RAMADI

RAMADI, Iraq, June 16, 2006 — The crack of insurgents firing rounds overhead sends him into action to find his target and neutralize it - fast. The Marine assesses multiple enemy targets approximately 400 meters away. He sights in. His finger steadily squeezes the trigger as a single shot jets from his rocket launcher. The explosion rocks the earth as the perfect hit is rewarded by the now silenced enemy – courtesy of the "rocket man."

"They are calling me 'Rocket man' because of all the rockets I've fired since we have been here," said Lance Cpl. Richard M. Mason II, of Medina, Ohio. "It's an adrenaline rush to be the guy firing the rocket during a firefight." Mason has accurately fired 24 rockets in combat and his teammates have dubbed him appropriately.

The 21-year-old assaultman with K Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment has become a vital asset in the ongoing battle against the insurgency in the capital of Al Anbar province. "During almost every engagement he has stopped enemy fire by destroying insurgents held up in a building," said 1st Lt. Carlos M. Goetz, 2nd platoon commander. "Without hesitation he has exposed himself to enemy fire numerous times in order to execute my intent and help his fellow Marines."

"Twenty-four is an awesome feat. He has become very proficient at his job," said Goetz, 29, from Miami, Fla.

Mason decided to follow his grandfather's footsteps by joining the Marine Corps in October of 2003. So far during his enlistment, he traveled with 3/8 to the Caribbean in 2004 and participated in Operation Secure Tomorrow in Haiti. He battled the insurgency in Fallujah in 2005 and now, on his second tour to Iraq, he is helping to improve the security conditions in Ramadi.

His weapon is a portable anti-armor rocket launcher known as the shoulder-launched multi-purpose assault weapon or SMAW. When fully loaded, this 30-pound weapon can destroy bunkers and other fortifications during assault operations. It even has the capability to bring down battle tanks.

In 2004, Mason attended the School of Infantry after graduating boot camp. This is where he learned to become efficient with his favorite weapon system. The mixture of classroom instruction and live fire proved to be the perfect recipe for Mason's growing skill. "My instructor had the same last name as me and he was always pushing me to be better," said Mason. "On SMAW ranges I took everything very serious as if I were in combat."

While the SMAW system is effectively equipped with a technologically advanced optical device and 9mm spotting rifle, Mason said he prefers the old-school method when aiming in on his targets, even in the dark.

"I prefer the iron sights. I don't use a scope or the spotter," said Mason. "In this type of environment you don't always have time to use those things."

One night during an attack on the Government Center, mortar teams launched illumination rounds to give Mason enough light to see his target. However, the objective was not the only thing the flare illuminated; it also exposed Mason's position on the roof. Insurgents spotted him and rounds came flying his way. That night he fired four rockets in heavy contact to repel the attack.

"It's not difficult to fire. It's the loud explosion going off right next to you that's hard to deal with," he said. "People anticipate the recoil but there is none and as far as the explosion you just have to learn to deal with it."

In another situation, K Company Marines at the Government Center began exchanging machinegun fire with insurgents May 2. The insurgents managed to burrow themselves inside a well fortified building which made it harder for the Marines to eliminate the threat. Mason was ordered to fire a rocket at the building from the rooftop. He scrambled to the rooftop again exposing himself to incoming fire, his teammates laid down suppressive fire and he launched a rocket at the building.



U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Richard M. Mason II serves as an assaultman for 2nd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment. Nicknamed the "Rocket Man," the 20-year-old from Medina, Ohio, has effectively fired 24 rockets using the shoulder-launched multi-purpose assault weapon or SMAW during combat operations in Ramadi. The portable anti-armor rocket launcher has the sole purpose of destroying bunkers and other fortifications during assault operations. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Joseph DiGi-

"His quick reactions possibly saved the lives of his fellow Marines. You only get one opportunity to shoot it," said Goetz. "It leaves a big signature so you need to be on target."

Cpl. Jeremiah A. Hendricks, an operations clerk for the battalion, met Mason during their deployment in Haiti.

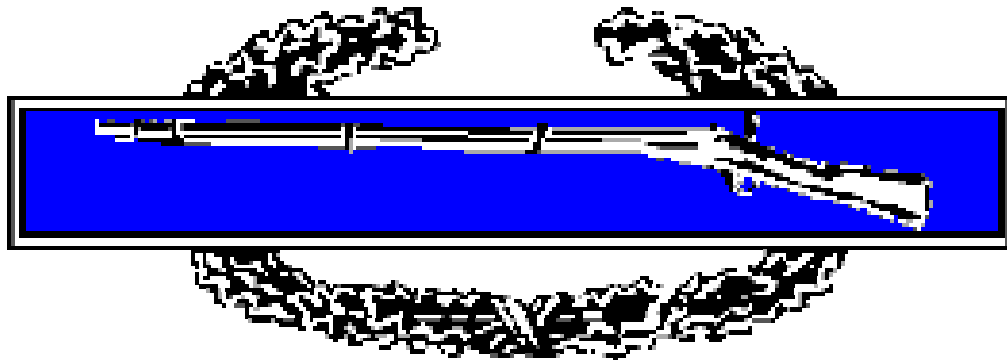
"I'm impressed by what he's done. It motivates me to know his skills are being used well in battle," said Hendricks, 23, from Atlanta, Ga. "It takes a lot of courage to be exposed to enemy fire so many times."

Hendricks is one of many of Mason's fellow comrades who say he is an outstanding Marine and asset to the platoon.

"He displays a lot of maturity and is always willing to do the job," said Goetz. "He's an advantage to our platoon and the Marine Corps benefits from having him in their ranks."

"It makes me feel good when they specifically call for my name over the radio when they need to send a rocket down range," said Mason. "I feel like a real asset."

COMBAT INFANTRY BADGE



July 15 1966, headquarters 1st cavalry division (airmobile), special orders number 196, **combat infantryman badge**. Number five on the list, Dennis Blessing RA19836031 pfc E3. The **CIB** was established by the war department on 27 Oct. 1943 and by executive order 15 November 1943 the **combat infantryman badge** was created. The **CIB** was designed to enhance morale and the prestige of the "Queen of Battle" the Infantry. Originally called the "fighter badge" in order to be eligible an individual must be an army infantry or special forces officer in the grade of colonel or below or an army enlisted soldier with an infantry mos who has satisfactorily performed his duty while assigned or attached to a unit of brigade, regimental or smaller size during any period such unit was engaged in active ground combat. The mere presence of an individual in a unit in a theater of operations during a period for which unit campaign participation credit is earned does not count; a unit must have been in active ground combat with the enemy during the period. Factors which led to the creation of the **CIB** are the following: (1) The need for large numbers of well trained infantry to bring about a successful conclusion to the war and the already critical shortage of infantrymen. (2) Of all soldiers , it was recognized that the infantryman continuously operated under the worst conditions and performed a mission which was not assigned to any other soldier or unit. (3) The infantry, a small portion of the total Armed Forces, was suffering the most casualties while receiving the least public recognition. (4) Gen Marshall's well known affinity for the ground forces soldier and , in particular, the infantryman.

The **CIB** is held in the highest of esteem among army military personnel. This award is the most prestigious and coveted "badge" an army soldier can receive and has always been deliberately restrictive by the army. When worn on the uniform it is always displayed above all other decorations. Women automatically are disqualified from receiving this award because of the combat exclusion policy of the military barring them from **MOS's** such as infantry. General officers also are ineligible for the **CIB**. It is a sought after award by anyone who had the chance to earn one. In developing the CIB, the War Department did not dismiss out of hand or ignore the contributions of other branches. Their vital contributions to the overall war effort were certainly noted, but it was decided that other awards and decorations were sufficient to recognize their contributions.

FROM THE FRONT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE



AMERICAN FORCES INFORMATION SERVICE

NEWS ARTICLES

SAMAWAH, Iraq, June 22, 2006 – All coalition troops will leave Iraq's Muthanna province by the end of July, making it the country's first province to be responsible for its own security since the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi



An Iraqi policeman guards the governor's house in Samawah, Iraq, June 22. Coalition forces are withdrawing from the province, and Iraqi security forces are shouldering the mission in the area. Photo by Jim Garamone

California State Fair



Information about the 2006 California State Fair:

August 26 is the day for free admission for members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

Fair Open August 11 - September 4, 2006

Exposition Blvd., Sacramento

The Cal Expo fairgrounds come alive every summer as the State Fair becomes a "city within a city" that hosts nearly one million visitors. Folks come from near and far for the memorable delights of this 153-year-old extravaganza that includes exciting exhibits, amazing attractions, live entertainment, and the Magnificent Midway. The 2006 California State Fair will run from August 11 - September 4, 2006, with Mondays closed (open Labor Day.)

Every Friday

Seniors Day - \$6 admission for Seniors 55+

Saturday, August 26

First Responders Day - Free Admission for members of the armed forces, veterans, law enforcement and allied emergency service agencies in or out of uniform with proper

ARTIST	DATE	GO LD CIR CLE PRI CIN G
Kenny Loggins	Friday, August 11, 2006	\$20
Loverboy	Wednesday, August 16, 2006	\$10
Boyz II Men	Thursday, August 17, 2006	\$20
REO Speedwagon	Friday, August 18, 2006	\$20
Lifhouse	Tuesday, August 22, 2006	\$20
Collective Soul	Wednesday, August 23, 2006	\$20
Sinbad (comedian)	Thursday, August 24, 2006	\$20
Village People	Friday, August 25, 2006	\$10
Rick Springfield	Tuesday, August 29, 2006	\$20
Ted Nugent	Wednesday, August 30, 2006	\$20
Tesla	Friday, September 1, 2006	\$20
Ciara	Monday, September 4, 2006	\$20

<http://www.bigfun.org/>

<http://www.bigfun.org/2005/GeneralInformation/datestimesprices.asp>

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SERVING MADERA COUNTY VETERANS



News You Can Use

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

VA Regional Office, Oakland

1-800-827-1000

VA Life Insurance Center

1-800-669-8477

VA Medical Center Toll Free (Fresno)

1-888-826-2838

Cal-Vet Home Loan Information, (Fresno)

559-440-5132

Patient Advocate (Fresno VA)**

Ext. 6970

Telephone Advice Nurse (Fresno VA)**

Ext. 6933

Outpatient Clinic – Merced/Atwater (Castle)

209-381-0105

Service Representative: (DAV, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5642

Service Representative: (VFW, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5647

Service Representative: (AMVETS, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5816

Service Representative: (American Legion,
Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5648

**Fresno VA Pharmacy, (to order 14 days before
you run out call by touch tone phone)**

559-225-6100 Ext. 5333

CVSO Madera County (pager) D. Blessing

559-661-6895

Fresno Vet Center (Fresno)

559-487-5660

Transportation to VA Medical appointments

** Call VA Fresno toll free number first

1-888-826-2838 ext. 6424